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THE SEARCH AFTER REALITY

THOUGHTS ON
HINDUISM, BUDDHISM, MUHAMMADANISM
AND CHRISTIANITY

BY
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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1925

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PREFACE

LIVING in close contact with Hinduism, Buddhism, Muhammadanism and Christianity, I have studied their sacred books and the writings of their leading thinkers; while, from personal conversation with many of their learned followers, I have been able to extract much information regarding their faiths. The results of my thinking on these four great religions I have set down in this book.

It is not my intention to undertake a systematic and historical review of these religions, but I have sought to set before my readers in thoughts, clothed in simple words, a few of their fundamental principles

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in the hope that those who are seekers after the Truth may be helped to know the Reality.

I acknowledge with many thanks my indebtedness to the Rev. T. E. Riddle, of the New Zealand Presbyterian Mission, Kharar, Punjab, for the great help he has given in translating this book into its present form from my Urdu MSS.

SUNDAR SINGH.

SUBATHU, SIMLA HILLS,
September 1924.

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CHAPTER I

RELIGION AND REALITY

RELIGION is a natural and universal demand on the part of human nature for the recognition of a supernatural power, Who can meet all the needs of those who are obedient and faithful in their duty to Him.

In other words, we may say that the aim and object of religion is to obey the commands of Him Who is the Creator, Lord and Preserver of the Universe, to worship wholeheartedly, and to enjoy His fellowship Who is the Almighty, Eternal and Omnipresent God.

This infinite Source of Life, Who is the First Cause of visible and invisible things, is Reality.

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I. GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT FROM IDOLATRY TO GOD

1. In very ancient times people were like the savage and uneducated people of to-day. They did not realise their spiritual needs, or, if they felt them at all, they were not deeply conscious of them. They felt only their bodily wants, and they worshipped, instead of the Creator, His created things, such as the sun, moon, fire, air and water. With the exception of the Hebrews, there was no race in which there was a knowledge of the One True and Living God. Hence, for their bodily needs they worshipped, in the form of idols, those visible things from which they hoped for benefit, or which they dreaded as evil.

2. Later they made images of their gods, and brought offerings and sacrifices before them, and, when even this did not seem sufficient for them, they went a step further and began to worship good and evil spirits, and the spirits of their ancestors. As their

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spiritual horizon widened, even this failed to meet the calls of their growing spiritual natures, and they were forced to seek and worship a spiritual Being Who, in both worlds, would be able to satisfy all their bodily and spiritual needs and cravings. So God has revealed Himself to them according to their spiritual needs and capacities; "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 1-2).

3. Ancient people used simple and crude forms of stone, bronze or iron implements; but we do not now have to use weapons and implements of that kind, because in our day we have advanced far beyond the culture of their age. It is true that we still retain the senses from which their needs have sprung—hunger, thirst, for instance, are still the same—but the means we use to satisfy those needs have changed with the progress of time. In the same way, although from their historical and religious books we have come

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to know that their need was the same as ours, it does not mean that we have therefore to adopt their method of idol worship.

The object of learning about the habits of these people is that we may know what means they used, and to what extent they succeeded, when they found themselves engaged in the struggle between good and evil, and with sin and its evil results, in their effort to gain salvation.

In our own time, in a similar way, and to an even greater extent, people find themselves entangled in the difficulties of the struggle between evil and good, in the effort to obtain salvation. Yet there is a progressive revelation of Reality that fits the need, capacity and state of development of every man and every age. This does not mean that there is any change in the Truth or Reality, even though it may appear in varied forms to persons differing in culture and in circumstances. New aspects may be revealed, but the Reality remains the same and unchangeable.

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II. "A MAN ONLY UNDERSTANDS WHAT IS
AKIN TO SOMETHING ALREADY EXISTING
IN HIMSELF"

1. Followers of different religions, and people of different temperaments and capacities, believe that by the knowledge, faith and experience which they have, they can fully define and describe Reality; though often their experience is such as to limit even their dreams and visions. The differences, however, which exist among them are only on the surface. In the root idea of Reality which they seek to define there is no difference.

It is as if three men, one wearing red, one blue and one green glasses, are looking at a white flower. To each the flower appears to be of a different colour. All are agreed on the basic truth of the existence of the flower. Their whole argument is about the colour, and as soon as they take off their glasses the real colour of the flower is seen by them all. The beliefs and senses of men are like glasses

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through which they estimate and examine all existing things. But they cannot understand the Reality as they should, until their hearts have been enlightened by God. For those, however, who are real seekers after truth, He who is the light of the world "which lighteth every man coming into the world" (John i. 9, viii. 12), will lead them on to Reality.

2. When we see a thing from a distance it appears small, and we do not perceive its real nature; but when we have come near to it, by degrees we come to know the thing as it really is. No change has taken place in the thing itself, but our experience and knowledge of it have increased. So, step by step we shall enter into the intimate fellowship of God's immediate presence, and we shall increase in our spiritual knowledge and experience, until we arrive at the full recognition of Reality. "For we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2; 1 Cor. xiii. 12).

3. The man who has not seen an apple-

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tree, but has seen only its tiny seed, can never understand that the complete tree, wood, flowers and fruit, is all contained in it. If the seed finds the conditions necessary to its growth, then at the appointed time its real nature will appear; and all its hidden possibilities will come into being, and reach to perfection. Thus the whole problem will be solved. So, leaving everything else out of consideration, man does not even know what qualities and abilities are hidden in him; but if he walks in fellowship with God, and according to His will, then he will continue to obtain all necessary aids for his growth, and will reach that state of perfection for which God created him. Then all difficulties and problems will be solved. "And it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

4. Trees grow in unlimited space, yet there is a fixed limit beyond which they cannot extend. The force of gravity will not

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permit them to go one inch beyond their appointed bounds. In the same way, our wisdom, understanding and thoughts are limited to the circumference of a very small circle beyond which it is not possible to reach.

In the future world the attractive power is love, and this, instead of hindering, gives every help and support for the growth of the soul towards perfection.

5. It frequently happens that some thinker, working quite independently of others, has arrived at the conclusions that they have already reached. The reason for this is, that the world is like an immense museum filled with a great variety of things. Each visitor that comes in sees the exhibits through the medium of his own experience, and, colouring them with his own feelings and fancies, tells others about them. Each does it in his own way, but the conclusions are the same. On the other hand there are people with some small obliquity in their intellectual vision, and with a want of depth in their spiritual experience, who, in seeking to explain the

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Reality, have coloured their writings and speeches with their fancies, and have expressed diverse and distorted views. But the Reality is the same.

III. THE SENSES ARE THE INTERPRETERS BETWEEN THE SOUL AND EXTERNAL THINGS.

1. Bodily senses and the perceptions of the soul, from their very nature, are nothing in themselves, but act only as interpreters between the soul and other things. As the sweetness of the sweets is not for the sweets themselves, so the perceptions of the senses are not for the senses themselves. Nor is man, as the materialist believes, a piece of automatic mechanism that runs by its own power. Because a machine does not know that it is a machine, and because there is nothing in the brain and nervous system that of itself can produce thoughts and ideas, therefore these work only as the instrument of man's soul.

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It is useless to argue with the extreme mechanists, who declare man to be an automaton, for no automaton could establish the theory that he was an automaton. • It is useless to argue with those who declare that thinking, feeling, willing and imagining are negligible bubbles on a stream of protoplasm, for no bubble can alter the direction of the current, as ideas can alter the flow of our life. "Ideas have hands and feet," as Hegel said.

2. If man's intelligence and ability depend on the largeness of his brain, which gives him pre-eminence over other creatures, then what does the marvellous ability of the honey-bee and the ant depend on, the size of whose brains may be considered as next to nothing?

If they say that this is all instinct, then how do the wonderful roots of trees, in their search for nourishment, spread out in the direction of their food, and turn away from that which would injure them?

What is the instinct, or brain, which directs vines and creepers to twine their

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tendrils round other things and so to support themselves as they climb upwards?

Then what quality is there in magnetism that attracts, or repels, even insentient and inanimate things?

This then is the truth. That Creator Who has granted to insignificant creatures ability according to their need, has Himself made man in His own image and likeness, with understanding like Himself, and this can lead him back to the Creator of the Two Worlds, and into harmony with Him.

3. We know much more than we can ever put into words, because we can never explain the whole of our inner consciousness. Something is always left unexpressed. We have experiences which are beyond our powers of expression, but are not beyond our comprehension.

At times we have an intuition, and lofty thoughts suddenly flash into our minds. These we have not learned from any one, because no one can explain them; nor have we been able to gain knowledge of them

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in the visible world through our senses. Hence the question arises, How have we been able to come to know these hidden things?

I would say that the proof of this is that our souls are connected with the spiritual and unseen world whose light, without our being aware of it, is reflected in our inner selves. By means of our inner perceptions some truths from that other world come to us, but their proof will be possible by experience only when we enter into that world, which we now see as in a glass darkly.

4. Ants and bees, within the limits of their little worlds, are a wise and hard-working folk; but, outside the circle of their lives, they see higher creatures and men whose existence and nature they can measure only in terms of their own little lives. So in the spiritual world we come in contact with the highest spiritual beings, about whom our knowledge is as small as the ants' knowledge of us. On the other hand, though man is so much superior to the ant, yet he

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has no complete knowledge of what that insignificant little creature is. In the same way, the knowledge that higher spiritual beings have of us is imperfect. He alone Who created all things has perfect and complete knowledge of every creature.

IV. GOD AND HIS CREATION

1. Before the creation of animate and inanimate things there was space, and, if the whole universe should be destroyed, space would always remain; but it is unthinkable that the universe should be destroyed and that space should remain void. It is not possible that matter came into existence in space by its own creative power, or that living organisms should spring from lifeless matter. Consequently, when we find order and design in the universe, it is a proof of the existence of an Almighty and All-knowing Being, Who, being Infinite and Eternal, created and filled space with existing things, both seen and unseen.

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2. There is nothing eternal save God. So we have to face the question that if the universe is not eternal then it must have been created, and if so, when God created existing things a change must have occurred in Him. But this is impossible, for He is unchangeable. The truth is to be found in this, that before the universe came into being it existed in the knowledge of God. To exist outwardly (objectively), or in His knowledge (subjectively), is the same thing to Him.

On the other hand, if we consider the universe as eternal then God is not the Creator; and if He is not the Creator, He is not Almighty; and if not Almighty He is not God. Such a God is like a strong man, who is the owner of his property and can make use of his possessions, but, being limited in power and knowledge, does not know the real nature of things he uses. In God such a limitation is contrary to His nature and attributes. But we need say no more. The universe was in His knowledge, and came into being by His creative power. This

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universe is not commingled in Him, as pantheists hold, but is separate from Him, although it is from Him, and in Him, and will remain in Him for ever.

3. "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters", and countless kinds of created things came into being before Him; and the Spirit of the Lord still broods over human souls in the limitless ocean of space. He alone knows the great and glorious beings who will be manifested, and, becoming perfect like their Creator, will enjoy His presence for ever.

4. In the world there are wholesome things, but bitter poisonous things are also to be found. God is indeed the Creator of these things. But their evil essence is created by the powers of evil. So also God is the Creator of all souls, but the depraved nature that is in men results from their free will. God did not create sin and evil, nor did He incline men towards it, but He left them altogether free to choose their way for themselves. But God, Who is love, can

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create such a holy and health-giving change in human souls that their evil nature and all their spiritual diseases are removed for ever.

When the root of sin is removed, then its evil effects will disappear from the whole creation, except that the lessons of that sad experience will always remind men of the need for greater watchfulness against sin in their future lives.

It is impossible that anything contrary to God's nature and attributes should remain eternally in the realm within which He is Sovereign.

5. People usually hail with great delight the beauties of nature, such as are seen in fruits and flowers, rivers and lakes, mountains and landscape scenery; but their attention and affections are so engrossed by the natural beauty of things that they fail to get behind them to the Creator, Who, hidden behind the works of His hands, exists screened by His creation.

When the universe is so beautiful, then how

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glorious must be the Creator Himself! When the gifts of His hands are so sweet, how much more will be His presence Who created all this sweetness!

The pity of it is that senseless man is satisfied with the created things, and remains ignorant of his Lord's life-giving and soul-satisfying presence.

6. Animals know their masters, but man, who is more noble than the rest of creation, has sunk lower than the animals, and does not know his Creator. For, blinded by his sinful nature, he fails to recognise his real self. Should he come to know himself or his real nature, then by the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit he will recognise Him also in Whose image he has been created.

V. THE NEED OF RELIGION

1. While the waves are running over the surface of the water we cannot see our faces in it. In the same way, until the waves of the world's storm have been stilled in the

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heart of man, he cannot see his real state of spiritual need. When in the calm of meditation the state is recognised, then in his helplessness he clearly perceives his need of God for help and salvation, and, bowing in prayer, yields himself to Him.

2. If the heart is not deceived and is free from the entanglements and seductions of the world, then as the needle of the compass is attracted towards the Pole star, so the heart itself responds to the attraction of God, and turns towards Him. For it is not possible for human nature to be wholly unaffected by the attraction of Infinite Love and Holiness. "No really great man was ever without God" (Seneca).

3. Where people have not reached to a correct knowledge of God, their religion is based on fear and selfishness. I once asked some people of the Lepcha tribe in Sikkim why they had forsaken the true God, and worshipped evil spirits. They replied, "We always live in fear of the harm that evil spirits may do us, so we try to please them. But

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what use is there in praying to God, or good spirits, or in worshipping them, when there is no danger of their harming us? ” They did not know that through our connection with God we can overcome evil spirits, and that God will always protect us from every kind of attack that would bring us harm.

4. An ancient philosopher, feeling dimly the need of God and religion, said:

“In the primeval age of disorder and violence, laws might strike crimes committed in the open day but could not touch secret sins hidden in the gloomy depths of conscience. A sage advised that to make men moral they must be made afraid. Let them invent gods who could see and hear all things, cognisant not only of all human actions, but also of men’s inmost thoughts and purposes.”

Though this philosopher was ignorant of the existence of God, yet hidden away in his nature is clearly seen the reflection of God’s being; and behind his thought about inventing a god, God Himself is seen to be actively present. In short, every race, in every age,

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has in some form or other shown its deep craving for God.

I shall now attempt to write something about the four great religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Muhammadanism and Christianity, with a view to finding out which of these religions is sufficiently universal to satisfy the cravings and needs of the human race, and to what extent it can offer peace to the individual soul, burdened by the sense of its separation from the Eternal God.

CHAPTER II

HINDUISM

THE word *Hindu* is not found in any of the Vedas, or Shástaras (religious books), and its real meaning is unknown. It is possible that the Aryans, who lived in the neighbourhood of the river Sindh, were called Sindhu, and that this name was corrupted into Hindu.

The Sacred Books of the Hindus comprise four Vedas: Upanishads, of which twelve are important; six Darsánas; Bhágavad Gítá; and many other Shástaras and Puránas.

A Hindu leader has^{*} written the following about Hinduism:

“There are no dogmas in Hinduism. You may believe in any doctrine you choose, even atheism, without ceasing to be a Hindu.

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You as a Hindu must in theory accept the Vedas as revealed religion, but you may put your own interpretation on the Vedic texts. This leaves a loophole for you to escape from the thralldom of dogmatism."

Hinduism embraces totally different systems of doctrine, and that man is a Hindu who, having been born of Hindu parents, accepts any of these systems. Hinduism had no single founder. In widely separated ages, different religious teachers wrote what seemed right and true, and passed on their teaching to others. Hence there are to be found within Hinduism teachings not only varied, but even contradictory. Among its teachers were many real seekers after truth, and *bhaktas*, or devotees, who had received some measure of light from that God Who "left not Himself without witness" among the nations (Acts xiv. 16-17). Also, some of these devotees, in becoming *Sādhus* and *Sanyāsīs*, renounced not only the world and its luxuries, but even their kingdoms as well, and spent their time in meditation. In

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the world to-day it would be difficult to find a people more engrossed in religious observances than the Hindus.

I will now give a brief account of the chief doctrines of Hinduism.

I. VEDÁNTISM

1. *Vedánta* means the end (*anta*) of the Vedas, or the end of knowledge. It is mainly based on the teaching of the Upanishads, which comprise the philosophy of the Vedas with their commentaries; but the teaching of the Vedánta philosophy is found in the Darsánas and Bhágavad Gítá and in other Shástaras.

The chief doctrine of the Vedánta is that all is *Máyá*, or Illusion, except *Brahma* or God. If this is true, then it is useless to practice *Yoga* or *Bhakti* (devotion), or to seek the merit of good works, because He who brought *Máyá* into existence will Himself destroy it. If this is beyond His power, then *Máyá* must be more powerful

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than even Brahma himself. For Máya can bring into its control all those physical manifestations the total of whose material forms is held to be the Brahma. Besides this, what proof has the Vedántist that those who accept the Máya teaching, or those who through meditation gain enlightenment (*yogi*), or even Brahma himself are not Máya?

The truth is that there is one True, Almighty and Eternal God, and that this world is His creation. This material world is not Máya or Illusion, as the Vedántists and Sophists believe, but is real existence. The creation is neither God Himself, nor is the creation separate from Him. His life-giving presence is present in all creatures, because "in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28).

2. The Vedánta philosophy teaches that as the particles of snow melt into their original element, and flowing down join the river, which passes on into the ocean; so men, like separate particles of snow, are melted by the fire of knowledge, and losing

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their individual existence, return to mingle in the ocean that is Brahma.

If we accept this teaching, then we must admit that there is another power besides Brahma. For as the cold freezes the water, and keeps the particles of snow in discrete individual existence, so this power keeps in separate existence all different forms of being, and restrains them from reabsorption into Brahma.

If we accept Shankarácharya's dogma that Máyá is the creative power of Brahma, then the whole responsibility for man's state rests on Brahma, who created both man and ignorance (*avidyá*). Hence man cannot be held responsible for his sin, for his very existence as a separate being depends on 'Ignorance', which is the root and cause of sin.

Perhaps it was in the light of this teaching that Swámi Vivekananda, at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, said, "It is a sin to call a man sinner." If this is true, then all the teaching of the Vedas and Shástaras about Good and Evil works (*karma*)

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is futile, for if the fact of sin is denied, then man's good differs not from his evil.

3. If knowledge (*jñāna*), as well as Good works (*karma*) and Devotion (*Bhakti*), is necessary for salvation (*mokṣa*), then what is the good of it if by receiving it we lose ourselves in the universal being, and our souls (*ātman*) in the universal soul (*param-ātman*)? Here we have annihilation instead of salvation! and when we are ourselves absorbed into Brahma our knowledge (*jñāna*) will also be lost. Looked at in this way, 'knowledge' does not continue to be 'knowledge', but becomes everlasting ignorance (*avidyā*) and dissolution. When we were in the state of 'ignorance' at least we had some knowledge of ourselves, but when we have gained salvation through 'knowledge', we have to part with even the little that we had before absorption into Brahma!

A tree is known by its fruits, so I would like to ask the Vedāntists a question. Is it the fruit of 'knowledge' (*jñāna*) that in India (where this theory of 'knowledge'

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has been taught, and where its teacher was born), in spite of this teaching, millions of its people have for centuries remained in a most appalling state of ignorance?

If they say that this 'knowledge' is not for the common people, but for *yogis* and sages, that means that it is not for all, so all cannot be benefited by it. We may sum up: because it is not for all, it is not universal; and if it is not universal then it is not true, because truth is for all.

4. This example is usually given by Vedântists to show that all we see is only an illusion and a dream. In the dark a rope appears to be a snake, but in the light we see its real nature, and the illusion is dispelled. But this does not prove that there are no snakes in the world, for if there were no snakes, then, when we saw the rope, the idea of the snake would not have occurred to us, because the thing that does not exist is unthinkable. There is no need to say any more. The created things that we see around us are not a dream, nor an illusion, but are real.

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5. Again, Shankaráchárya teaches this, "The world in great periods is created and reabsorbed in Brahma". This means that Brahma created living beings, bound to ignorance and pain. So foreign is this to our ideas of a just God, that Swámi Sardanand has been forced to explain that "It is a play of the Infinite". But if this is true, then such a Brahma is like those Roman tyrants who cast men among the wild beasts, that they might be entertained by the sight of human distress. Such an idea is absolutely contrary to the nature and attributes of God.

6. It is a principle of truth that we should love others as we love ourselves. This is the foundation of all joy, peace and progress. But the Vedánta teaches that, "Whatever is, is nothing but Brahma". Hence love of self and love of Brahma are parts of the same whole—and there is nothing wonderful or praiseworthy about it if Brahma loves himself, for cruel and selfish men do the same. The saltiness of salt is not for the salt itself but for him who eats it, and the love

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of the lover is not for himself but for his beloved—that both may be happy in the mutual enjoyment of their love. And in seeking close fellowship with God man has this object only, that the craving of his soul may be satisfied.

The influence of Christianity and modern thought has so permeated the life of India that even some Vedántists now believe that salvation is not the commingling or absorption of ourselves in God, but is our living in conscious communion with Him.

7. Rámanuja and his followers deny the Máya teaching, and hold that the creation is as real as God Himself. If we exclude the views of this sect, the Vedánta philosophy may be put in a nutshell thus:† No human relationships are real, but all are Illusion (*Máyá*); therefore a boy looks on himself as his father's son. But through Yoga or 'Knowledge' (*Jñána*) he is freed from this illusion, and having now perfect 'knowledge', realises that he has no father at all, but is his own father!† Therefore the relation

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of father and son and their mutual fellowship is destroyed for ever when 'knowledge' is attained and illusion disappears.

Illusion (*Máyá*) is like an abscess in the being of Brahma. Through the surgical operation of 'knowledge' (*jñána*) it is removed, but again appears—that is it disappears in the periods of world annihilation, and again appears in the periods of world reconstruction.

If this is so, then Vedánta, which is held to mean the end (*anta*) of all knowledge, actually puts all real knowledge to an *end*! It is useless to expect to reach a true knowledge of either the Creator, or of the Creation, by diving into such a whirlpool as this Vedántic teaching.

II. TRANSMIGRATION AND SALVATION

1. In order to settle their intellectual difficulties, Plato, the Egyptians and the Hindus have all held theories, differing only in detail, of the transmigration of souls. If, as Hinduism teaches, we admit that there

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are 8,400,000 rebirths, then the difficulties are increased instead of being solved. For example, take a leper, or a man born blind. If he is suffering for the sins committed in some former life, then he should have been informed about the sin that he is being punished for, otherwise the object of his punishment is not attained. For the aim of punishment is that the guilty may be warned, so that in future he may live a better life. But if he is ignorant of the reason of his punishment, then instead of taking warning, and improving his life, he will grumble and consider himself 'not guilty', and blame God. In ordinary life no judge will pronounce sentence on a guilty man without telling him of his crime. Then how can the Judge of Judges punish a sinner without telling him about his sins?

Also, if we say that God gives neither punishment nor reward, but that each man's evil or good deeds bring their own retribution or reward (*karma*), then the man ought to be made aware of the balance of his good or

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evil deeds, otherwise *karma* will be like the materialists' blind force, which shoots off chance shots without aim or object.

2. If we think of the doctrine of the Transmigration of the Soul as a true explanation of life's problems, then we must believe in the Eternity of the Soul; and most Hindūs do indeed hold the view that God, Soul and Matter are eternal. That the Soul is not eternal may be stated as a syllogism of the Nyāya philosophy, thus:

(i.) If the Soul is eternal it is infinite in Time, so its knowledge and power, like God's, must be infinite;

(ii.) For if it is infinite in one attribute, it must also be infinite in all other attributes.

(iii.) It is unthinkable and impossible for it to be infinite in one attribute and finite in all others.

(iv.) From experience we know that our human attributes are finite;

(v.) Therefore the Soul is also finite in Time.

If the Soul is really eternal, and, from

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Eternity till now has not been able to obtain salvation or freedom from Transmigration or Illusion, then what hope can there be for its obtaining salvation in the future? It seems evident therefore that the soul must remain unsaved to all eternity.

3. When men who have lived sinful lives return to earth for rebirth, they will be born as men of low caste, as animals, or even as insects or plants.

Three main views are held about what happens to the soul at the end of each earthly existence.

(a) There is the view of those who hold The Way of Works (*Karma marga*), who say that the soul goes either to the heaven of the gods or to the moon (*pitrlók*), which is the heaven of the fathers, until the accumulated merit of its good deeds has been exhausted, when it returns to earth, and is again involved in Transmigration (Bhágavad Gítá, ix. 21).

(b) There is the view of those who hold The Way of Devotion (*Bhakti marga*), that the soul is bound to the cycle of Trans-

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migration, but seeks liberation, or absorption in God, by love and devotion to Him.

(c) There is the view of those who hold The Way of Knowledge (*Jñāna mārga*). Here the soul, having obtained enlightenment or 'knowledge' (*jñāna*), goes to the heaven of Brahma, and is there reabsorbed into the Universal Spirit (Brahma), and is not again reborn in the same individuality on earth.

If a prisoner were told that, because of some good deed, he could be king for a few days, and that after that he would have to return to his wretched prison, how could he be happy during his time as king, when the dread of the suffering of his coming imprisonment would be with him all the time? In the same way we may ask, What good or what joy can the soul get from a temporary stay in the heaven of the gods, when dread of a return to earth and its evils is always present?

If, through being holy and pure, a man gains the heaven of the gods, then what can happen there to cause all his merit to be

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swept away, and to force him again to return from heaven? If he is perfect and holy enough to enter heaven, then why is it that everything that he has gained, with so much toil and pain, will be trampled in the dust again, and he himself be turned out of heaven? Or, having reached that holy place, will he commit sin there that will necessitate his having to come back to earth again?

When amid untold difficulties on this earth he was able to make such progress in goodness as to enable him to enter heaven, then, while living in fellowship with the gods, would it not be easier for him to advance still further in holiness, and, instead of coming back, to stay there for ever?

And when, from the efforts made in this brief life, he has attained to goodness of character and of life, then living in the holy fellowship and perfect environment of heaven, could he not remain perfect for ever? for it would be easier to continue unto perfection there than amid the difficulties and evil influences of the world. If this is not

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possible, then instead of this being Salvation and heaven it will be merely deceit and hell.

Salvation is emancipation (*mokṣa*) from Birth and Death and the Cycle of Rebirth by reabsorption into Brahma. Let us illustrate it thus: A man, by the sweat of his brow and unremitting toil, had become rich, but just when he had obtained his ambition, and was prepared to enjoy the luxuries that his money could buy, his wealth was stolen and he himself murdered. Would you call this Salvation or Destruction?

How true are the words of Mr. Bose: "Hindu Philosophy begins with a recognition of human sorrow, goes out in vain in quest of a proper remedy, and ultimately arrives at annihilation as the goal where human misery terminates only in extinction of life."

III. BHÁGAVAD GÍTÁ AND KRISHNA

I. In the story told in the opening verses of the Bhágavad Gítá, when Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra saw his relations

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and dear ones arrayed against him, he refused to fight, and said, "I covet not kingdom, nor wealth, nor honour. It is better that I should die by their hands than that I should slaughter my own people and be branded as a sinner."

But Krishna persuaded him to fight, saying, "Do not grieve. A soul neither dies, nor can it be slain, nor can it be burned." In the sentiments of these verses, does it not appear that Arjuna shows a higher sympathy and love than Krishna does?

Perhaps some one will say that Krishna incited Arjuna to fight for the sweeping away of tyranny and injustice, and for establishing right and justice. To this there are two answers. First, that the weapons of love are more effective than bow and arrows and the sword; and second, if this is all Illusion, then he who allowed it to exist could have made it disappear, and could have manifested Reality without the need of fighting. More especially is this so in the case of an incarnation like Krishna, who ought to have restrained Arjuna

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from fighting and killing, for "All are one Brahma", and it was not possible that he should fight with himself!

2. Some consider Krishna and Christ to be either one and the same person, or at least equal to one another; but if we carefully consider their lives and teaching we see in them a whole world of difference. Krishna encouraged Arjuna to fight and kill, but Christ taught His disciples, "Love your enemies, and pray for those that despitefully use you"; and when hasty tempered Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Christ touched it, and immediately the wound was healed (Luke xxii. 50; John xviii. 10-11). In His life Christ gave a practical demonstration and noble example of the teaching on love and non-violence, which He gave in the Sermon on the Mount and in many other of His discourses.

3. Krishna said, "To save the good and to destroy sinners I am born from age to age" (Gítá, iv. 8). Jesus, on the other hand, came

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to save sinners (Matt. ix. 13; Luke xix. 10). What need was there to save the good and righteous, for already they had ensured Salvation for themselves by their good works (*karma*)? But there certainly was a great need of saving sinners; for all mankind are sinners.

It is useless, therefore, to look to Krishna for Salvation, for he has declared that in all his appearances in the world, he comes to destroy sinners rather than to save them. This shows the necessity of seeking Salvation from Christ, Who came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. i. 15).

4. In the Bhágavad Gítá the attempt has been made to reconcile the Sánkhya, Yoga and Vedánta systems of philosophy with the doctrine of Bhakti (devotion), and evidence is not lacking that it was now and again influenced by the teaching of St. John's Gospel; as, for example, the words "You in me and I in you" are found in both John xiv. 20 and Gítá, ix. 29.

Then among ascetics and devotees the

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Yogi is considered to be worthy of the highest honour of all. But it is the defect of the Yoga system that in *samádhi* (meditation), as the *Yogi* sits in a set posture, with breath restrained and eyes fixed on the tip of his nose (*Gítá*, vi. 13), he frequently falls into a state of trance, in which he sees a topsy-turvy world in which, instead of his being able to find the truth, he is in danger of being deceived. Would it not be better for him to fix his attention on God rather than on the tip of his own nose?

5. In Europe I was often asked the question, How is it that, century after century, Hinduism continues to maintain its hold on Indians if it is not suitable for their needs? There are two reasons. First, the educated and intellectual have found some consolation in some philosophical system of Hinduism, like the *Vedánta*, and they have become so immeshed in it that they have not been able to see beyond it; and second, the bonds of the caste organisation have so obstructed the religious freedom of the great

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mass of Hindus, that they have not been able to break away from them.

But in these days many reforms and changes are taking place within Hinduism, because Indians are coming into contact with the peoples and philosophies of all lands; and especially because they are feeling the influence of the religious and ethical teaching of the Christian Gospel. God alone can foresee what will be the fate of Hinduism in India. It is possible that its increasing failure to meet the religious needs of India will cause it to pass away, even as Buddhism has already done.

CHAPTER III

BUDDHISM

THE founder of Buddhism was Sákya-muni Gautama. As a child he was called Sidhartha, but after receiving 'enlightenment' he was called Buddha. Sidhartha was born in the sixth century B.C. in the palace of Rajah Sidhodan, near the foot of the Nepalese Himálayas.

When twenty-nine years of age he renounced the world, and spent six years in asceticism and meditation under a Bo tree at Gáya. Then, having received enlightenment, he began to teach his system of religion, and, after teaching for forty-five years, died at the age of eighty.

Buddhism cannot really be called a religion,

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because in it there is nothing about God, Who is the foundation and life of all religion. It is a combination of morality and agnosticism, and the influence of Hinduism has to some extent coloured its teachings as well. Thus we find in it the doctrine of Transmigration and the Law of Rewards and Retributions (*Karma*), and, in a different form, the doctrine of Salvation and extinction (*Nirvāna*). But, unlike Hinduism, it does not contain incompatible doctrines, as that there are three eternal Realities—Soul, Matter and Brahma; or that God is both without attribute or *nirguna*, and possessed of attributes or *saguna*.

I. BUDDHA'S RENUNCIATION AND TEACHING

1. At the age of twenty-nine a son was born to Sidhartha, and, filled with joy, his father ordered a chariot and sent him for a drive in the gardens, that he might show his joy to all. While driving along, they saw by the

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roadside a frail old man, then a sick man, and then the body of a dead man. He was much moved by the thought that all will, sooner or later, have to pass through these states. A little further on he saw a fakír (*bhikṣu*) sitting under a tree, and his coachman told him that this fakír, having found the world full of sorrow and suffering, had renounced it. This produced a still greater effect on Sidhārtha's mind, and, pondering about it all, he determined that he too would renounce the world. That night he drove to the borders of his father's kingdom, and, stripping himself of his royal robes, he sent them back with the chariot to his father. Then, on foot, and clothed in the robe of a religious devotee, he set off for Gáya.

On arriving there he began the practice of austerities, and continued them for six years, until, worn out by the severity of his practices, he swooned. When he recovered consciousness the Enlightenment came to him, that nothing was to be gained by austerities, nor by the mere enjoyment of

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luxuries, but that one must take *The Middle Way* between them.

2. After he had been thus enlightened, he went on to Benáres to preach his doctrines. On the road he saw a naked fakír, called Upáka, who asked Buddha, "Friend, who art thou?" Buddha answered, "All-conquering have I now become. Mine is all wisdom. No teacher have I.¹ My equal nowhere can be found in all the worlds of God and man. There is no one to rival me. I have attained Nirváná."

3. Had Buddha not been influenced by the religious nature and environment of India, he would have been simply a materialistic philosopher; but, influenced by the religions around him, he became a moral teacher. Although an intellectual man, he could not by pure thought comprehend the

¹ I think that the reason why he did not go to the fakír in the garden was lest some one should say that he had been the fakír's disciple. My opinion is that if Buddha had conversed with that fakír, then he might have been saved from his years of austerity, and from agnosticism, and been helped back to the worship of God. —

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Being of God. He could not admit a God himself, nor could he teach others about Him. But he was compelled by the God-given law of his inner nature and conscience to give moral teaching. As other sages and recluses who wished to solve all life's problems by their intellects and invented methods had failed, so Buddha got no enlightenment from austerities and meditation beyond a few philosophical and moral ideas. Hence seekers after truth must, without man-made rules, humbly open their hearts to God, because only through prayer can men find God and satisfy the deepest longings of their spiritual natures.

4. The Buddhist Scriptures, especially the *Tripitaka*, the most sacred of them all, teach that the personality and being of the soul is not everlasting. It may be compared to a river in which the drops of water are always changing, or to fire which is the product of the burning of sticks. } So the soul is born from the combination of the elements, and again, like a fire, is extinguished. } Existence is a perpetual dreamless sleep. Some move-

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ment arouses the soul, and it awakens to life, but only for a short time.

In the universe there is a universal law of causation in operation, and because of this all that is appears and again vanishes.

In Buddhism natural law itself takes the place of God, and beyond this no sort of Divine personality exists. Hence Buddhists neither pray nor know the meaning of prayer nor of its benefits. As a well-known Buddhist missionary, who was a delegate at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, once said, "Buddhism . . . looks to no god or gods, and asks for no extraneous help. . . . Prayer is useless, for what is required is effort. The time spent on prayer is lost."

5. Buddha, being kind by nature, taught that all sorts of men, beasts and living creatures should be treated with love and kindness. We have an example of his moral teaching. Once his son Rahula asked, "What are good and evil, and virtue and vice?" Buddha replied, "Evil and vice is that which will cause injury to you or to

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others. Do not do it. Good and virtue is that which will be profitable to you and to others. Do it."

6. The question therefore rises, If in Buddhism there is neither God nor hope of a future life and happiness, then how was it that it made such progress in India?

(a) People were attracted to it by Buddha's renunciation of his kingdom and of his life of luxury. There is the example of Rajah Pukkusathi of Taxila in Kashmir (now in the Punjab). Without having even seen Buddha, but after having heard about him from Rajah Bimbisara, he was so impressed that he too followed his example in giving up his kingdom and becoming a fakír or bhiksu.

(b) Many in those days, who had no better philosophy, found relief in the negations of Buddhism, and became its adherents.

(c) Buddha's teaching against caste exclusiveness, idol worship, and the claims of pre-eminence made by Brahmans, attracted many, especially of those who wished to be free from the arrogance of the Brahman's assumptions.

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(d) The great and powerful king Asoka made determined efforts to spread Buddhism within his kingdom, and in this he succeeded.

Yet in spite of all this, the agnosticism of the Buddhist teaching could not appeal permanently to the religious instincts of the people of India; and its hold steadily declined, till to-day, except among a few admirers of Buddha's personality, it has ceased to exist as a living religious faith in the land of its birth.

The idea expressed a few years ago by a Buddhist writer, that the decline of Buddhism began with the raids of Mahmud of Guzni on India, is surely far fetched; for why, then, was not the Hindu religion destroyed together with Buddhism? Were the Muhammadans enemies of the Buddhists only, and not of the Hindus, who were the greater idolators?

II. NIRVÁNÁ

1. Nirváná is the term used by Buddhists for Salvation. It means the extinction of all

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desire. Desire is the cause of all pain and suffering, and if all desire can only be removed from our hearts, then pain and suffering will disappear with it.

If they mean the destruction of evil desires only, then all lovers of truth will agree with them. But their meaning is that all desire, good as well as bad, is to be destroyed. In Ceylon I once met a Buddhist leader, who said in course of conversation, "Even good desires are based on selfishness; for when we desire to do good to others, then, consciously or unconsciously, we have in view the reward that we shall merit. So it is only in the hope and desire of some benefit to himself that a man worships any god. As our experience of life extends, our desires, and along with them our anxieties and dissatisfaction, also increase, hence not only bad, but even good desires should be repressed; and this extinguishing of desires is Nirváná." To this I replied, "As living creatures cannot exist without feeling, so it is impossible for any living being to exist without desire. If they

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did so exist, they would be lifeless, and where there are feelings then desires will surely be produced from them. To satisfy lawfully every physical and spiritual desire is a law of being, and if we kill the desires we utterly destroy the life in which the desires are. From this point of view, elimination of desire would be destruction of life and not Salvation."

2. From experience we know that no desire is without an object, for He Who created desires, and beings endowed with desires, has provided the material for the satisfying of those desires according to their capacities. And here is the proof:

Every desire makes its own demand, and it is obvious that the material is available fully to satisfy that demand. If the material for satisfying those 'desires' does not exist (*i.e.* water for thirst), then perhaps we may come to the conclusion that 'desire' has no object, and in that case should be extinguished. No one has 'desire' for suffering, but rather seeks to avoid it (and even if

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he is ready to suffer, he does it with the 'desire' for its rewards and good results). And no one wishes for ill-health or for spiritual pain; for 'desire' of health is a law of life, without which security and vigour of life are not possible.

3. If perfect salvation is the extinction of all desire, >then the desire to kill desire is itself a desire.< It is like trying to extinguish fire with fire, or to dry up water with water. It is absolutely impossible and contrary to the law of nature.

4. The fact that the Creator has given us spiritual and physical perceptions proves our connection with the things, seen and unseen, of our environment. If it had been the Creator's will that we should have no connection with this creation and environment, then He would not have given us that intimate connection and perception with those spiritual and physical realities; but the very existence of that material, and our capacity for making use of it to meet our varied needs, shows not only the Creator's noble plan, but

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also a special object and intention on His part.

But I have said enough. When it is the desire of the Creator Himself that I should use rightly His created things, then why should I make myself a sinner through my not using those things, and by my utterly killing the desire to fulfil the desire?

5. The fact of any desire being born in us is proof of the presence of the material for satisfying that need, and proof that it will be fulfilled in its own proper time. As Emerson has said, "The longing of the soul is the prophecy of its fulfilment."

One word more. As we progress in life our desires, but not our restlessness, increase, because restlessness can only result if desire is not satisfied. But as in the providence of that Almighty God we progress, so, according to His plan, He will satisfy our increasing desires, and however much we may progress, and to whatever extent our desires increase, that Infinite Being, which is Love, is sufficient and able fully to satisfy all our desires.

CHAPTER IV

MUHAMMADANISM

THE founder of Muhammadanism was Muhammad, who was born in Arabia in A.D. 570; and the sacred books of this religion are the Qur'an and Hadís (Traditions); but the latter are not accepted by all Muhammadans. We might divide the Qur'an into those 'revelations' which were given at Mecca, and those given at Medína after the Flight or *Hidjra*. The subject-matter of the former deals largely with affairs relating to the political and social life of the growing Muhammadan community, while both in it and in the Medína portion is much teaching which had already appeared in the Bible, Talmud, and in some other books.

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In Arabia, in Muhammad's day, there were many Jewish and Christian communities; and several Christians are known to have existed among the relations of the Prophet, and to have exercised some influence upon him. Also, he lived on intimate terms with his wife Khadíja's brother, Warqa bin Nofal, who translated the Gospel into Arabic.

There is no need to write at length about this religion, for in it there is no originality of thought. It deals with subjects already treated of in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

It will be sufficient if we touch on two or three points only. Muhammad calls Christ "the Word of God" and "the Spirit of God". We could not wish for a better name to prove the divinity of Christ than the name "*Ruh allah*", or Spirit of God, which is used of Christ in the Qur'an. Because God is a Spirit, and God is one Spirit and only one, and Christ is the manifestation and incarnation of that Spirit, therefore there is no ground left for the objection that Christ is the Son of

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God; for as body is born from body, so Spirit is born from Spirit—and God is Spirit—therefore, because Christ was conceived by the Spirit of God in Mary, we can call Him Son of God and Spirit of God.

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1. Contrary to the principles of Islām and of the Qur'an, a considerable number of Muhammadans profess a pantheistic and mystical form of creed. Among the Hindus there are Vedāntists, the catchword of whose belief is *aham Brahma* (I am Brahma), so among the Muhammadans the Sufis use as their catchword *and'l haqq* (I am truth); and some of them are so far from a real comprehension of the truth, that they mock at Reality and strangle all understanding and discernment. As Sheikh Ibrahim in Irshādāt has written :

“ A certain fakir entered the cloister of Junayid wrapped in a black blanket. Junayid asked him the reason for his mourning. He

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said, 'My God is dead.' Junayid peremptorily ordered the fakir to be turned out. This was done three times. On the fourth occasion the fakir was asked to explain himself. He said, 'Not knowing that my carnal self (*nafs*) was a manifestation of God, I have killed it, and therefore I am in mourning for it.' "

2. The Vedánta teaches that Salvation (*mokṣa*) means absorption into Brahma through knowledge that clears away illusion; and Buddhism maintains that Salvation is extinction of desire—that is Nirváná—so also the Sufis claim that Salvation is the *fana fi 'llah*, or annihilation in God.

But to destroy selfishness, and all sins and evil desires that spring from it and injure one's own soul and the souls of others, is the real *fana fi 'llah*, and not annihilation of self as the Sufis believe. To kill one's own selfish desires and motives rather than to cause loss to others, to do the will of God rather than to consider the good and benefit of others, and to live for the glory and praise

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of God, is to fulfil in our lives the intention of the Creator. To die to sin and to the world, and so to enter into life, and to live in God for ever is life in God (*baqa fi 'llah*) instead of annihilation in God (*fana fi 'llah*), and is Reality.

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIANITY

CHRISTIANITY is Christ Himself, Who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John xiv. 6). This cannot be said about any other religion. They are based on ceremonies and teachings, but Christianity is based on the living Christ Himself, Who is with us for ever. Christ gave His followers no word written by His own hand, for the reason that He Himself was always to be with them, nay, in them, and to carry on His work through them. No human prophet or apostle could dare to say, "I am with you even to the end of the world." God alone can say and do this. And we know that down to the present time He has been with

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His people, and through them has worked, is working, and will continue to work, " that 'God may be all in all "

I. PROPHECIES CONCERNING CHRIST

1. The Lord Christ became man for the Salvation of the world over 1900 years ago, but before the creation of the world He existed from all eternity (John i. 1-10, viii. 58, xvii. 5), and His coming was foretold in different ages and to different men. It is no mere chance—as some critics think—that all these prophecies were literally fulfilled in Christ. It is the work of that One Eternal Spirit, Who, in sundry times and in divers manners, foretold the coming of a Saviour, in order that they might prepare for Him.

But 'chance' is a word used to explain any phenomenon when we are ignorant of the causes which brought it into being; but in reality nothing happens in the world which has no cause. For example, the falling of a ripe fruit by itself is no mere chance. It was

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for months silently being prepared for a special object. When the fruit was ripe, the tree, which could not eat its own fruit, gave it up for the pleasure and enjoyment of others. So Jesus said, "These are the words which I spake unto you . . . that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me" (Luke xxiv. 44); and, in the fulness of time, He gave to the world the fruit of Salvation.

2. Before His incarnation the prophets made it known to the Hebrews that Christ was to come; and when the Jews had been dispersed among the nations of the world, they too spread the news of the coming of a Deliverer; and those nations again told about the Coming One to their own peoples; so in many countries people were waiting for His coming. Then, after the ascension of Christ, the Christians, who were scattered, gave out the good news of His having come, and of that Salvation that had been made available through Him (Acts viii. 4); and

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through the labours and sacrifices of His servants, the news of His Salvation has reached to the farthest parts of the world.

II. CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AND CRUCIFIXION

1. Jesus was not only six hours, but was His whole life on the Cross. If a clean-living man cannot bear filth and dirt, and a good man cannot endure evil association for even a few minutes, though he has been born amid dirt and filth, then how great must have been the distress of a sinless and holy being to have to spend thirty-three years among sinners! It is impossible for a sinful man to estimate and understand the bitterness of that suffering. If we could comprehend the mystery of that Cross, then it would be easy to understand His wonderful and immeasurable love, and how He is the incarnation of love, and how for our Salvation He left the Glory of the world above, and came down to this world of sin.

2. Christ's suffering was in a special way

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God's suffering for man's salvation. There is only one source of all life, and from Him all living creatures have received life, and we live in Him by means of that relationship and connection. But through that living connection which He has with His creation, does God not feel pain when His living creatures suffer? Has He not also a feeling for pain? Who has created a feeling for pain? And if this is so, then why is it not possible that He should suffer in Christ?

Christ came especially to reveal the true and limitless fatherly love which had been hidden from eternity, and that, by giving His own life, He might save the souls, not of the good but of sinners. He came, too, that by dying and rising again He might prove that that death, which the world counts death, is not death but is a fountain of life, and that mere separation from God because of disobedience and sin is itself suffering and death.

3. Both worlds were represented at the time of the crucifixion of Christ. As people

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of all provinces and districts had gathered together at the Passover season, so, as if the whole creation together gave witness to the atonement for sin, beings of the Spiritual world, with the Angels, were also present (Matthew xxvii. 51-54). Because Christ gave His life as a ransom, therefore full authority and power were given Him on earth to forgive sins, and to save sinners; and He was once again given that full power, in heaven and in earth, which He had left when He became man (Matthew ix. 2, xxviii. 18).

III. THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

I. Christ rose in the same body in which He was crucified. It is sin alone that brings corruption to the body and makes it unfit for entering heaven. But Christ's body was without fault and spotless, and after He had conquered death it was changed into a glorious body; and, in that glorious body, He is seated with God on His throne (Revela-

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tion iii. 21). The wounds on the Cross in glorified form are engraved on that glorious body, that when the saved see them they may always call to mind His boundless love, and realise how He has suffered on the Cross to save them, and to give them the right to share in His eternal glory.

2. God is a Spirit. Beside spirits He created lifeless matter. (Because He created matter, *i.e.* a thing indifferent to His nature, it does not mean that He also is matter, or like it.) But if God, being a Spirit, could by His perfection of power create matter, which is not spirit, then why by the same power could He not make alive his *avatár* (that is, Christ's physical body), and make it into a Spiritual and glorious body? He surely could, and in truth He has done so.

As we sleep for our awakening, so we die for our rising again. As night closes down we sleep in weariness and weakness, but in the morning we rise fresh and vigorous. In this way we die in weakness and corruption, but we rise again in life and glory (1 Cor.

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xv. 42), and enter that life where there will be neither death nor sin any more.

3. Some put forward this objection, If God is a Spirit, then how could He be clothed in a material body? But they forget this, that man has also a spirit, and how can a human spirit be clothed in a body? If a created spirit can be clothed in a human body, then why is it impossible for a Creator to clothe Himself in a body? We may say that this is possible for a human soul because it is limited, but not for God who is Infinite. This is true of God, but we must remember that an Infinite God has infinite power and infinite possibilities, which are beyond the range of human intellects.

This is the object of the incarnation: that He might bring again, through physical death and resurrection, into glorified bodies like His own, those whom He had made in His own image, and who, because of their sin, have fallen from their original state; and also that He might honour them with admission into His fellowship and eternal kingdom.

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IV. SOME PRACTICAL PROOFS OF CHRISTIANITY.

1. One of the practical proofs of Christianity is that in all ages and nations, and to all sorts and conditions of men, it has brought peace to their hearts, and has satisfied the longings of their souls. Only those have failed to find this peace who "seeing, see not, and hearing, hear not", in other words those who, amid the beauties of earth and sky, are blind to its colours; or who have ears but have no 'ear' for the appreciation of the most soul-ravishing music.

2. Experience has shown that if a man gains the whole of his ambitions, and becomes possessed of wealth and luxuries, still his heart is not satisfied, nor is he at peace. It is otherwise with the man who finds his peace in God, and is obedient to His will. For if the world, and all the pleasures that it can give, are snatched away from him, and even if he has to endure suffering and persecution, yet he has in his heart that true joy and

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peace "that the world can neither give nor take away".

He does not have this joy merely because he hopes to receive reward in the next life. He receives his nourishment and strength from "the hidden manna" (Rev. ii. 17), which the world knows nothing of, and in its strength is able to bear his cross and endure the suffering. It is this same spiritual food of communion with God that strengthens Christian believers. Hope of reward alone would never be strong enough to enable them to bear the sufferings they have to endure. Some indeed for a time might be able to withstand the suffering, but could never endure it for a whole lifetime.

But enough has been said. The fact that the life of the true Christian is in every circumstance calm and joyful, and to the end victorious, is the result of the filling of the Spirit, and of the presence of God in his life, and it is a clear and practical proof of its reality.

3. As the sweetness of sweets is not for

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the sweets but for the enjoyment of those who have a taste for them, so God is not only for Himself but for those in whom He has created the desire to enjoy the sweetness of His fellowship. Reality is described in many religious and philosophical works, but the way to enjoy communion with God is not found in them, but in man himself. For God has created man that they may continue in fellowship together, therefore He has also endowed him with a sense of the Reality and with the capacity to enjoy Him. The fact of His having given these spiritual feelings is the proof that Reality means man to enjoy His fellowship; hence the touchstone by which to distinguish the real and the unreal, and the true and the false, is itself present in man. Although this conscience is the God-given touchstone by which to test the false and the true in life, yet through sin it may become deprived of feeling and dead. But when by the grace of God it is awakened, it cannot be deceived; and when man realises the presence of Reality in himself, then his daily

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experience of Him proves Him to be a living power. For if we have in us this experiential proof, then, though thousands of books may be written against this spiritual experience, and filled with the strongest arguments of worldly philosophy and logic, yet they can never shake its proof, for the knowledge of the Reality rests in our own inner selves and not in the arguments of philosophy. It is clear to us, then, that the necessary discernment for recognising the sweetness of the sweets is not in books, but is present in a man's own tongue.

4. It is possible that, because of illness, some defect may appear in the sense of taste, and that some may be deceived about the sweetness of the sweets. But there never was, and never will be, such an illness by which millions of people lose their sense of taste. So it is possible that the spiritual feelings and perceptions of a few people may be defective, but millions, nay countless people of every race and country, and of every condition in life, who have found Salvation

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and peace in Jesus, bear witness to Him. Thousands, on account of giving witness to that Reality who has benefited and blessed them, have been burned, torn by wild beasts, cut to pieces by the sword, and they endured their trials with joy, and to their last breath continued to give their witness. Why? Was the spiritual perception and feeling of all defective? Never! This kind of talk is the same as calling the blazing sun of midday the darkness of night. It is clear proof that he who is able to make such a claim is himself lacking in spiritual feeling and in powers of discernment.

5. In the Himálayas I once chanced to come across a wild man living naked in a cave. He had never seen, or tasted, a sweet, and had no word for it in his language. When a friend of mine gave him one, at first he looked at it with suspicion, but, when he had tasted it, a look of wonder and a smile of pleasure showed how much he enjoyed it. Before he had tasted it, its existence or non-existence was immaterial to him. He

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had, indeed, in his tongue the sense of taste to enjoy the sweetness of the sweet, even before he had knowledge and experience of its sweetness. It was necessary to explain about the sweet, not about the sense of taste. In the same way man has a sense of Reality. Reality is a being separate from his own, but the power to perceive Him is present in him.

It is possible that because of sin this perception may become dead, so that a man may even deny the existence of God. Yet if he repents, and seeks God with a pure heart, then the Reality will be sure to reveal Himself to him, and he will be benefited and blessed; and afterwards, although, like a dumb man, he may not be able to describe his taste-experience of sweetness, yet his life and works will continue to prove its existence.

Whenever a man who has this personal experience of Reality finds his hidden thoughts and feelings expressed in the writings and speech of an experienced and spiritually-minded man, then, filled with joy, he exclaims, "This is the very truth that I

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have been wishing to express to others." Thus do all lovers of truth unanimously join with one another in giving to the world the proof of Christianity from the individual experiences of God which they have had in their own lives.

6. Before Christianity was preached throughout the world, although some good and right-minded men had attempted to alter conditions, they had not been able to do much for the progress and betterment of mankind. Women were looked on as slaves, and slaves were treated like animals, and no special provision was made to help the aged, or the sick, or the orphan, or the leper. But Christianity has changed this, and we see the fruits of its teaching on every hand. Women are counted as equal to men, and slaves are looked on as brothers. Hospitals, orphanages and leper asylums are to be seen everywhere; for the followers of Christ are taught to love others as they love themselves, and to look on the whole world as one family.

In Rome slaves and prisoners were made

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to fight with wild beasts for the entertainment of the crowd, and, to satisfy their blood lust, the spectators at the arena used to demand that gladiatorial combats, resulting in bloodshed and deaths, should be provided for them. There was no real sympathy between men in those days. But a Christian hermit, called Telemachus, felt compelled by his love for these sufferers to try to put an end to this savage lust for blood. While the slaves and prisoners were fighting, he jumped down into the arena. The spectators in rage stoned him, and those whom he had tried to save killed him with their swords. Though he was unable to do much on that day, yet he had sown a seed of love for men which grew in the hearts of the serious-minded, until by degrees this cruel custom was stopped. So the life of the Christian hermit triumphed.

7. In the world no nation nor religion can endure if continually torn by internal dissensions and harassed by attacks from outside; and no fort, nor city, can stand if it is

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bombarded both from within and without. Yet Christianity is such a religion. From the outside come attacks from Agnosticism, Infidelity, from world kingdoms and the powers of darkness; from within, heretics by false teaching, and nominal Christians by their bad lives, make unending attacks; but in spite of all these attacks and great obstacles Christianity has established itself, and is conquering in the world. What is this if it is not a practical proof of its being a true, living and soul-satisfying religion?

V. HIGHER CRITICISM AND MODERNISM

1. The Bible and Christianity have been attacked and criticised in every age; and the form of attack has been fashioned by the state of the civilisation of that age. In their own day these attacks seemed formidable enough, but they have seldom outlasted the generation that produced them. In spite of all forms of criticism by atheists and other critics, Christianity has continued to progress

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steadily. The opposition of its enemies, instead of destroying it, has only served to root it more firmly. Their efforts have failed because they could not withstand the Life and Power which were working in the lives of all true believers. The attack of critics in modern times is known as Higher Criticism, or Modernism. It is possible that it does shake the faith of weak, nominal Christians who have no spiritual experience and life; but it can never cause any kind of harm to Reality, or to those who believe in Reality. On the other hand, it is a means of strength and progress to true believers, for, as a short-lived epidemic carries away the infected, who spread the disease, and so help it to work itself out, so the critics who spread their rationalistic disease will gradually pass away, and their disease will die with them.

2. The criticisms and objections of scholars are frequently dependent on their own guesses and speculations, rather than on real facts. It does not follow, because a critic is a scholar, that his criticism is always scholarly. It is

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often based on hypotheses and speculations and is therefore not worthy of acceptance. It is possible that some of their theories may be reflections of the light of heaven, but it is also possible that they may flash back the reflection of the fire of hell. Then, too, learned critics may quite often be entangled in their own error and illusions. Their very earthly wisdom and philosophy are sometimes a stumbling-block to their understanding of the deep spiritual meaning of the inspired writers of the Bible. They too often examine minutely the outer shell, that is to say the style, or the internal evidence for dates, or writers' traits, and leave unexamined the kernel, which is Reality. But how differently the real seeker after Reality approaches the Bible! He wishes only to be in communion with Reality, and it matters not to him when, or by whose hand, any Book or Gospel was written. He knows that he has here the Word of God, written by prophets and apostles as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter i. 21); the proof of whose

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truth² is not based on history and logic—because Truth is neither new nor old: it is eternal. Further, such a seeker for truth wants spiritual food and eternal life, and he cares not if he learns it from Moses, David, Isaiah or Jeremiah, or from Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. He wants Reality only, and in communion with Him he finds the life of his life, and finds always abiding satisfaction in Him.

3. To say that Christianity has been a failure in Europe and America and in the East is altogether foolish and mistaken, and is not based on experience. It is not Christianity that has failed, but it is those people who have not understood the heart of Christianity who have been failures.

In my travels in Europe, America and in Eastern countries, I have seen that people are so busy in their factories, and in their laboratories and libraries, that they have no time to receive the blessings of Christianity. Some of them even confessed to me that they had made their lives so complicated that they

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were tired of them. If any man becomes weak from not eating food, or dies from not drinking water, then can we say that food and water have been failures to him? Not at all! It is purely a matter of a man's indifference and neglect. And if a man dies without making use of the medicine that is at hand, then there is in this no proof that the medicine has been a failure. Without doubt those who have whole-heartedly accepted Christianity, and have received its blessings, have aroused the world from its sleep of death, and have done work for the Salvation of mankind the effect of which will remain for ever.

4. The work of labouring men keeps them in the open air, and their food, being simple things—such as flour, rice, milk and vegetables—they are usually healthy; but those who forsake these simple healthful foods for a rich and highly seasoned diet, and who shut themselves up in offices and in studies, are apt to suffer from indigestion and other maladies. In the same way men of simple

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faith eat simple spiritual food. They get their strength from God's Word, and from the Holy Spirit. They spend their lives in helping and uplifting others, and continue to live in perfect health, happiness and peace. But those are likely to suffer indigestion (*i.e.* doubt, unbelief, etc.) who leave this simple universal truth and reality, and make it into an involved and philosophical teaching. For this philosophical teaching, attractive and alluring as it may be, is yet over-rich as a spiritual food, and they themselves and others who eat it become sick and finally die, without ever enjoying the experience of fellowship with the Reality.

5. Among lawyers there are law-learned and educated criminals who for their own gain unlawfully use the law and injure their own and the public morality. For although they know their client to be guilty, yet by their clever use of the technicalities of the law they save him from his proper punishment, and thus encourage him to commit further crimes. Hence, instead of the reform

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of the guilty and the good of the State, these civilised and refined criminals secretly injure the community. So also there are criminals of Bible scholarship, who use their God-given ability and learning improperly. They seek not His glory nor the good of His people, but by unjust criticisms and uncalled-for objections they injure the peace of heart and spiritual life of believers, and become themselves the agents of destruction. Our Lord has said of such, "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered" (Luke xi. 52).

6. Some critics, drawing a deduction from the parable of the Prodigal Son, say that no Mediator is necessary for our meeting with the Father, for the prodigal went straight to his father without a mediator. But they forget that the cases are not parallel. The prodigal had no need for a mediator because, before leaving the father, he had lived with him, and knew him well. There was no

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need for any one to tell him about the father. It was the experience of his father's fellowship alone which brought him home. Had he not had this, he could not have come back to the father without the help of a mediator.

So too it is with the Christian, who, after having lived in fellowship with God, has for some reason or other gone astray into sin. The very barrenness of his life has at last forced him to remember his past Christian experience, and when in true repentance he comes back to the Father, he comes knowing that the Christ and the Father are one (John x. 30), and that he can come without any other mediator. But no other sinful man except the Christian who has strayed can know the Father, or go to Him without the mediation of Jesus (Matt. xi. 27; John xiv. 6).

The prodigal and his elder brother are alike in one respect: neither made a right or profitable use of his share, for while the younger brother squandered his share, the elder did not use his at all. So there are many Christians who, through carelessness,

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make no use of their riches in Christ, and get no profit from their God-given gifts and blessings.

7. Some critics hold that the Gospel writers were guilty of exaggeration in writing about Christ. Let us remember that Christ's disciples were mostly simple, uneducated fishermen, who had no special literary ability; and who, in their accounts of His life, instead of exaggerating did not even mention numberless real facts about Him. We can estimate their limited understanding from the fact that after three years of companionship with Him, and after having over and over again heard His life-giving words, they could not understand the meaning of His kingdom, nor of His rising from the dead after three days. Can we believe that such stupid men as these could, from their own imaginations, have added to the facts of His life? It is impossible to think so when we recollect that, in all nations and ages, all classes of people have been so influenced by the mere reading of His life-story that

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they have been completely changed, and have become new creatures. This story is the work of God alone, Who knowing the needs and cravings of men's hearts, has satisfied them. Besides this, if there had been in the disciples any literary ability, they would have arranged the subject-matter of the Gospel in more precise order, *e.g.* first—the Life, Birth, Death, Resurrection and Ascension; second—His Teaching and Parables; third—His Supernatural Power and Miracles; and fourth—their own experience and views of Him. But they could not do this, because in accordance with the guidance of God they tried, in their own simple way, without nicety of style and without attempting to add anything, to put the Reality before the world as they had had experience of Him (1 John i. 1-2).

VI. CHRIST'S TEACHING AND EXAMPLE

1. Christ's teaching is so incomparable and unique that to say that He drew His

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inspiration from some other teacher or religion, is like saying that the sun has not its own light, but, like the moon, shines with the borrowed light of some other sun or planet. It is inconceivable that this could be possible. The authority with which He taught refutes any such claim (Matt. vii. 29). Again, if He had received His teaching from other sources He would certainly have made reference to them, as He did in the Sermon on the Mount, where, while giving His references to the Old Testament, He claimed authority to give His own interpretation, saying, "It was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you . . ." (Matt. v. 21-22).

It would be just as contrary to the truth to say that Jesus made great claims in order to benefit Himself, for His whole life was spent in seeking the good and betterment of others, and, above all, His Cross refutes any such statement. If He had been ambitious for worldly honour, then He would have attempted to save Himself from the death on the Cross, and would not have refused when

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people^a wished to make Him king. But as He Himself said, His kingdom was not of this world (John vi. 15, xviii. 36). He came into the world that He might make manifest the Reality, and by giving His own life might be able to give to believers the right to be heirs of Eternal Life, and of His kingdom.

2. Both John the Baptist—the forerunner of Christ—and Jesus Himself began to preach in these words, “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. All pain, suffering and death in the world is caused by sin. In the next world separation from God, and hell itself, are the results of sin. Therefore without true repentance for sin it is impossible to be saved from this separation and destruction. Because God is Love He does not force any one to come to Him, nor does He interfere with the free-will that He has given man. But when a sinner comes in repentance, and bows his head and opens his heart before God, then the Holy Spirit gives a new life, through His life-giving

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activity, and then and there the kingdom of God begins in his heart. Hence it is essential to repent of sins in order to become a son of God, and to enter into His eternal kingdom.

Later on in His preaching Christ told of those who are to be counted as blessed, and of their reward (Matt. v. 2-12). They are these:

“The poor in Spirit.” They humbly acknowledge their own spiritual poverty, and become God’s faithful and obedient servants. Christ Who is the King of Glory became poor, that through His poverty He might make the poor in spirit heirs of His kingdom for ever (2 Cor. viii. 9).

“Those that mourn.” They will for ever receive that peace that the world can neither give nor take away. In fact, only those will enjoy this comfort who have suffered and been refined in the furnace of suffering (John xvi. 22).

“The Meek.” They will inherit that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness—that kingdom of which Christ has made them heirs.

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“ They that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” They will obtain the bread and water of life, in the kingdom of righteousness, and will be satisfied for ever.

“ The Merciful.” They will obtain mercy, but oppressors, and those with hearts hard as a nether millstone, will find their oppression has returned in awful form on their own heads; and where they now laugh they will then moan at their past neglect and present evil state (Luke vi. 25).

“ The Peacemakers.” Like mercy, peace is one of the attributes of God. And those who reconcile separations and quarrels among their neighbours, and those who cast down the dividing wall between God and man, will be called the children of God, because “ the ministry of reconciliation ” has been given unto them (2 Cor. v. 18).

“ They that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.” It is a great honour to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake, because such people are engaged in a holy war, the reward of which they will get in glory. The spirit

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and character of the world are hostile to truth and Reality, so those who follow the truth will surely be persecuted (2 Tim. iii. 12).

But whether they are called to ease or to suffering, these 'blessed' ones who have a personal experience of God will be like salt and light in the world, and, through their works, will always be for the praise and honour of God.

3. "Resist not evil" (Matt. v. 39). If we resist evil men, who would do us harm, then neither party is likely to be profited; probably both will be injured, as in the collision of two trains both are shattered. But if, by not resisting, we suffer, then, on the one hand, the cross-bearer is benefited spiritually, and, on the other hand, the oppressor will be impressed by the forgiving spirit, and will be inclined towards the truth. It has been shown that by treatment of this kind the lives of many wicked men have been changed. Here is an example. Last year, in the hills in India, while a godly Indian Christian was praying in his house alone,

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three thieves stealthily entered his room, and took away all they could get. When the man had finished his prayers he noticed that all his goods had gone, except the box over which he had been bowing in prayer. This box contained money and valuables. This 'man of prayer' took some cash and valuables in his hands, and ran after the thieves, calling, "Wait! wait! you have left some valuables behind. I have brought them to you. Perhaps you need these things more than I." When the thieves heard this, at first they thought it was a trap, but when they saw that he had no weapon and that he was alone, they came back to him. The man said to them, "Why did you not tell me at first that you needed these things? I would have gladly given you whatever I have; now you had better come home with me, and whatever you want you may take away." The thieves, seeing the strange life of this man of prayer, were so affected that their lives were changed for ever, and they began to say, "We never imagined that there were

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such people in the world. If you are so wonderful, then how much more wonderful must be your Saviour, Who has made you into such a wonderful and godlike character."

There we have the result of not resisting the evil, and of loving others as we love ourselves. If the man had resisted the thieves, and had tried to have them arrested, then in the struggle he himself might have been killed, and no benefit would have come to the thieves. But I have said enough. Whoever can act on this golden and unparalleled word of Christ, let him do so. Let us keep His perfect example before our eyes, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not" (1 Peter ii. 23). Whatever He taught He Himself first acted on, and He gave no teaching of which He did not give the proof and example in His life. In other words He preached what he practised, and practised what He preached.

4. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the

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kingdōm of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. xviii. 3-4).

In order to enter into the kingdom of God it is necessary for us to become like little children, for in them the following characteristics are found, which should be found in every child of God.

(i.) True love for parents.

(ii.) Believing without doubt everything their parents say.

(iii.) If we except original sin, they are free from all other sins, and also from pride on account of which Satan was cast down from heaven.

(iv.) Though children cannot express their wants, yet they try in lisping words, and when this is not enough, their very tears explain their need. If they cannot walk on their feet, then, crawling on their hands and knees, they reach their mother's lap, and get their food, and love that is beyond their understanding. ✓ And when to punish them

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she threatens or slaps them, instead of running from her, they run to her again for comfort. So when we become like little children in the kingdom of our Father, we reach a position that is great and high and glorious.

5. When in following Christ we deny ourselves, and bear the cross of suffering in witnessing for Him, and when we seek not our own profit, but the good of others, we find ourselves and a life enriched an hundred-fold (Luke ix. 23-25; Matt. xix. 29).

He who, in his quest for the Reality, crushes out the demands of his selfish nature, will find God and himself for ever. On the other hand he who, governed by his self-will, lives separate from God will fall from even his present low state of life and be destroyed, as tares that are really wheat that has degenerated, and has become of no use but to be cast away.

6. If we apply mercury to the back of a piece of glass, we make a mirror which reflects our faces, but if no mercury is applied,

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we look right through the glass. So if we back our lives with selfishness, we see in them only the reflection of self, but if the screen of that selfishness is removed, then wherever we look God will appear, and we shall know that we are shielded in His loving arms.

7. Renunciation of the world does not mean that we should forsake all worldly things that bring us pleasure, either through holding that 'things' possess in them the inherent quality of evil, or because we expect by renouncing them to receive supreme spiritual bliss. It is one thing to leave pleasures in order to gain greater joys. It is another thing to leave them because they are evil. There is no wrong in enjoying pleasures, either spiritual or physical, in a proper way, nor is there any need to renounce them. But there are pleasures which are obstacles to our finding the source of happiness. These we must renounce, for some of these transitory pleasures keep us indifferent to real and everlasting joy. In some

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cases, indeed, these alluring pleasures tear away our hearts from the Creator, and, as a man following the light of a will-o'-the-wisp wanders on and is lost in the darkness, so these pleasures allure us and lead us on to destruction. It is essential that we should tear away our hearts from all created things and fix them on the Creator, and that we should use His God-given gifts with thankfulness and in moderation.

Moderation in renunciation as well as in pleasure—‘the middle path’—is often the best means of obtaining the object that we desire. Failure to get it often comes from our having gone too far on one side or the other of its appointed limits. To continue living in absolute darkness is as harmful to the eyes as is excessive brilliance of light, which may also blind us. Excess of cold, or of heat, may cause hurt, but within ordinary limits of temperature are useful and pleasant. A low sound, difficult to hear, is irritating, and a very harsh sound may even injure our ears, but within moderate

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limits we hear with pleasure sounds musical and sweet.

8. It is the essence of the teaching of Christ that "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind", and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37, 39).

If we love the Lord whole-heartedly, we shall obey Him always, and spend our lives in His service and for His glory. And if we love our neighbours—which means the whole world—as ourselves, then we shall do nothing harmful to others, but shall always try to help them along. If we obey this teaching we fulfil the aim of the whole law. Long before any one was aware of their presence, gold and silver and diamonds were hidden away in the earth. So before Jesus, the incarnation of Love, revealed to the world "the exceeding riches" of the Reality, this bottomless mine of love existed from all eternity. But when He came He not only taught about love, but by giving His life He completed and

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perfected that teaching, and was in every way a perfect example for us.

VII. MAN'S FINAL DESTINATION

1. Materialists, whether scientists or philosophers, are so blinded by the dust of matter that they can see neither the soul in the body, nor the spiritual world that lies beyond the material world; for they imagine that the group of physical and spiritual qualities that go to make up a human personality are ended at death. Scientists, dealing with tangible facts, are limited in their experience. They can, to some extent, tell the *How*, but have no answer as to the *Why* of things. They can say how two and two make four, but have no answer as to why they are four. There are senses in which they may be more than four, as, for example, two and two grains of wheat make four, but by sowing these four grains hundreds, or even thousands, of grains can be reproduced. Contained in the four grains there is the germ of the thousands (even

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though this fact is hidden from the scientist or philosopher who is obsessed by a mathematical formula), and where the germ is, the plant also lies hidden, and will appear at its fixed time in conditions suitable to its growth. Hence we may say that in the four grains thousands are present, and we may conclude that two and two are more than four. Now scientists, each with his views coloured by his experience, may tell *how* thousands are produced from four, but they can give no answer as to *why* they are produced; nor can they tell what life is, nor where it came from; and as long as they can give no satisfactory answers to these questions, then their claim that spiritual life ceases to exist with physical life is hollow and unsound.

2. Those who accept Darwinism, or Evolution, give us a theory that is harsh and merciless, and against all morality. They hold that to help the sick, the weak or the unfit, only causes them to increase; and this means injury to the community; hence it is better that they should disappear from the

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earth. As a scientist has said, "Our kindness often tends to multiply the sore we try to cure." If we accept this argument it is certain that we shall be committed to wholesale slaughter, because all pain and sickness, defect and weakness are caused by sin, and in the world no one is sinless, therefore no one has a right to live. There is no doubt, if such people could have applied their theory, the whole of civilisation and humanity would have been wiped out, and the world made desolate and empty.

But it is our good fortune that we dwell in the kingdom of an Almighty, Just and Merciful God, where no one can harm us, if we do not by sin destroy ourselves. If it had been the will of God that sores and diseases should have had no cures, then He would not have created drugs and herbs with curative properties. Their very existence is a proof of the special object for which they were created, and that people may be cured by these God-given means.

It is amazing that people give the name of

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Superman to a man so wanting in mercy, love and sympathy. Since he is wanting in love for God, and for man, he is *inferior man*, so much so that he is outside the pale of humanity altogether, and might be called a blood-sucking beast of prey. Such indeed is the Superman who is called World Conqueror. He is himself a poor slave to his passions, and every moment of his life he is being defeated in his own little self. Only that man has the right to be called Superman who knows his Creator, and lives for His glory and for the good of His creation. On the other hand, if a man fails in doing these things, then however highly civilised and educated he may be, he will be no more than a trained animal.

3. Man is like a water hemlock plant, which while growing in dry land is harmless, but becomes poisonous in wet and damp ground. So man in evil conditions and environment becomes himself evil and dangerous, but is made holy and pure from being in the presence of God and in fellowship with

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Him. Then God gives him a new name which fits perfectly his character and life, for only God, Who created them, and knows the things in themselves, can give a fitting name to things. But the name given by man cannot be appropriate because he does not know what the thing is in itself. The names man is forced to give being incomplete, because of his limited knowledge, God could not reveal His name to him at all, except in so far as He did when He said, "I am that I am" (Exodus iii. 14).

4. (a) "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." To be perfect like our heavenly Father is our life's destination. If, in heaven, we should reach an exceedingly high degree of perfectness, and our progress should then be stopped, we should not yet have reached the final destination of our being. For at no stage short of it can our being's ultimate object be perfected, because cessation of progress would cause stagnation and destruction. Besides this, should our progress be arrested, we should remain

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ignorant of many things; then as the innate human desire is to know more, this would create dissatisfaction in us, and heaven could not continue to be heaven for us. But to progress, and to have the hope of making further progress, would give us a wonderful interest and joy, and when, at last, we shall become perfect like the Father, then further incentive will not be necessary, because our destination has been reached. But love, the source of our being and the life of our life, will remain for ever.

(b) When man has attempted, by research and experiment, to win bodily strength from God's created things, and has to some extent obtained the means of prolonging life, then is it not possible that he may obtain eternal life and perfection of health and strength in the Fountain of all spiritual life? And when we have gained eternal life, progress in every way will still continue in Eternity. For when, in spite of many obstructions and unsuitable conditions, progress has continued in the world, then why is it that progress

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should be hindered in heaven, where all necessary means for progress, unobstructed in any way, will be available to us? But there, in the presence and fellowship of our heavenly Father, in infinite time, infinite means for infinite progress will be supplied continually, until we become perfect as He is perfect.

(c) If we and our knowledge always remain limited, we shall neither have the capacity to know the Infinite God as we should know Him, nor can we be "filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 19); nor shall we be able to be benefited fully by His infinite love. Moreover God, Who is love, and Who has made man like Himself, does not, through jealousy, prevent him from infinite progress towards a perfection like His own, nor will He for ever keep hidden from man many things of which he is now ignorant. It is also impossible that, when we shall be made perfect like God, we should rebel against Him, for our rebellious nature will have been destroyed before we

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reach that stage of perfection. It would be no perfection at all if we could retain even the desire to rebel. Besides this, by knowing Him, and by being filled with His infinite love, which is life of our life, our love and faithfulness towards Him will also become infinite. The very object of the incarnation of this love is to lift man to His own perfection, where all mysteries will be explained, and no kind of imperfection will remain. And here we reach our final destination. There are countless problems which arise as we progress towards perfection, which will be solved only in the world to come, but, as a chick as yet unhatched from the egg may wish to fly, so impatient man wants to solve all his difficulties and problems in this world. This is not only premature but impossible.

There is danger too that we may be involved in misconceptions from which there is fear of injury for the future (John xvi. 12). We must run with patience, and accept with thankfulness, and perform with obedience whatever has been revealed to us now, to

CHRISTIANITY

meet our present needs; and must leave all things concerning the future to Him, Who will safely bring us to our final destination—
“To be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect.”

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 3. Hasty generalizations and improper conclusions should be avoided.

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